



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 1, 2021

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FAFSA Application Opens October 1

Education, non-profit, business and government leaders across North Carolina are encouraging students to take advantage of financial aid that can make college free or affordable

Raleigh, N.C. – Education, non-profit, business and government leaders across the state are warning of dire consequences to the state’s economy and students’ futures if more North Carolina students don’t take advantage of federal, state and institutional financial aid to attend college.

The 2022-23 Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA form is now open at www.FAFSA.gov, giving North Carolina students access to more than \$120B in U.S Department of Education Federal Student Aid in the form of Pell grants, scholarships, loans and work study programs. As the FAFSA application process begins, the statewide [NC First in FAFSA](#) initiative -- comprised of education non-profit, myFutureNC, and key partners Carolina Demography, College Foundation of North Carolina (CFNC), the North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority (NCSEAA), College Advising Corps, the Hunt Institute, and the John M. Belk Endowment -- kicks-off their second year. This NC First in FAFSA collaborative aims to encourage all eligible students and their families to take the crucial first step toward free or affordable college by completing the FAFSA.

“Every student deserves a path to a quality, affordable postsecondary education,” said Cecilia Holden, President of myFutureNC. “With the majority of jobs now requiring education after high school, we want students to know that completing the FAFSA can help to access critical financial aid so that they can complete their credential or degree.”

More than 65,222, or 61 percent of North Carolina seniors from the Class of 2021, as of September 3, 2021, completed the FAFSA, down 3.1 percent compared to the same time last year. North Carolina

ranked 15th in the nation for FAFSA completions. ([See all state rankings](#)). Most concerning, students from low-income schools, rural schools, and/or schools with 40% or more students of color are completing the FAFSA at even lower rates than their peers.

With a goal of making North Carolina first in the nation in FAFSA completions, NC First in FAFSA partners are working directly with high school administrators and counselors to reach students, provide up-to-date tracking data, and disseminate resources to help students struggling with filling out the FAFSA form. Schools can keep track of their progress with the [NC First in FAFSA Tracker](#) to identify specific areas of need and create targeted efforts to increase the number of students who submit and complete the FAFSA. The Tracker calculates FAFSA completion rates using FAFSA completion data from the U.S. Department of Education and final high school graduation counts from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NC DPI).

“We know that students who complete the FAFSA are far more likely to enroll in higher education,” Holden said. “Without action, we will fall short of achieving our educational attainment goal. Increasing the number of college degrees and credentials earned remains essential to meeting the demands of North Carolina’s changing workforce.”

Help Completing the FAFSA

North Carolina students who need help completing the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#) will have the opportunity to get one-on-one guidance from the socially-distanced safety of their car at more than 25 college campus locations on **FAFSA Day, October 23** during [Countdown to College Month](#).

These [FAFSA Drive-in Events](#) on FAFSA Day allow students and families to fill out the FAFSA form at their local host site parking lot with the help of financial aid experts at local colleges and universities.

Why the FAFSA is Important

Today, fewer than half of all working North Carolinians hold postsecondary credentials or degrees. By 2030, 67% of jobs in the state are projected to require a high-quality credential or postsecondary education.

Completion of FAFSA is directly related to increased student enrollment in postsecondary education. According to the National College Access Network, high school seniors who complete the FAFSA are 84% more likely to attend college.

What is the FAFSA?

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA available at www.FAFSA.gov, is a free application that students seeking to attend postsecondary education must complete in order to access federal, state, and institution-based financial aid. Colleges and universities utilize the FAFSA to determine students’ eligibility for financial aid such as scholarships, grants, work-study programs, student loans, or a combination of aid.

In order to complete the FAFSA, applicants must create a [Federal Student Aid account](#). The parent or guardian of a dependent student must also create an account. Income tax return information from 2020 must be provided in order to complete the application. In recent years the FAFSA form has become simplified and streamlined to directly link to the IRS via a retrieval tool, making it easier for students and their parents/guardians to complete the FAFSA.

Filing the FAFSA early in the academic year before March is important to improve students chances of receiving financial aid since aid is awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. For instance, work-study program funding may run out if you file too late.

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About NC First in FAFSA

NC First in FAFSA is a myFutureNC Collaborative that focuses on increasing the number of high school seniors who complete the FAFSA application. Increasing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA, completion rate is a fundamental step in North Carolina's efforts to meet our state's 2 million by 2030 postsecondary educational attainment goal. Students who complete the FAFSA are more likely to enroll in higher education, persist in their college coursework and obtain a degree. Partners include Carolina Demography, College Foundation of North Carolina, the North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority, College Advising Corps, the Hunt Institute, and the John M. Belk Endowment. Visit www.NCFirstinFAFSA.com #NCFirstinFAFSA

About myFutureNC

myFutureNC is a statewide nonprofit organization focused on educational attainment, which is led by some of North Carolina's most influential education, business and civic leaders. Since its launch in 2019, myFutureNC has focused on decreasing the state's educational attainment gap by setting an ambitious goal to ensure two million North Carolinians hold a high-quality certificate or postsecondary degree by 2030. To do this, the organization and its partners are working together to ensure all students have access to postsecondary opportunities. Visit www.myfuturenc.org. #2millionby2030